

Iowa Youth Congress  
Drafted Bills  
6<sup>th</sup> Annual House Chamber Session  
Friday, October 28, 2011

**Education Committee**

**Student Accountability**

**Graduation Rates** (Kyle McGlade)

In our state, the graduation rates of high school seniors over almost all demographics went up. However, these figures have yet to reach the desired outcome of one hundred percent graduation. One major road block in the way to all children graduating is the age at which a student may choose to no longer pursue their education. The age must be raised from 16 to 18 years of age to help keep children in school and where they should be. This law would however make exceptions in the case of early completion of high school courses required for graduation. There would be no way for a child to not go to school until they attained the age of 18. By making children wait an additional two years before they could drop out; they have these years to fully mature and realize the consequences they face if they would fail to earn their high school diploma. In this way, the states dropout numbers will drop dramatically and our graduation rates will increase.

**Attendance Policy** (Kyle McGlade)

The accountability of students has dramatically decreased over the years. Fewer students attend classes and have no measurable consequences unless in an extra-curricular activity. In many school districts the plague of truant and tardy students disrupts classroom learning and harms the overall atmosphere of the building. By following the example of states such as California and Texas and charging students with a fine, if not in class, should be enforced. Any student that is truant and unexcused from school five times in a single trimester/quarter will be fined \$250 dollars and/or given community service to complete; along with the student, the parent(s) will receive the same punishment for neglecting to positively engage their child(ren) in education. Fines will not exceed the amount of \$500 dollars per year. If a child reaches the age of 18 and has failed to pay the fines charged to them by the state, they may be arrested and jailed for failure to pay. The money taken in by this new law will go back to the schools that have the offending persons. By earning extra monetary gains, the school will be more capable and suited to address the attendance issues and other problems in the schools. This money will not be used for any purpose other than continuing to improve the learning environment of all students. This law will affect only students on the high school and middle school levels, grades 7-12, as other students have very little ability to control their attendance problems. By this age they are more than capable to ensure that they can manage to make it to school on time and their failures are their own. To keep children in line with their school work and accountable even further an Iowa 90% code shall be enacted. Any child not in attendance of a class at least 90% of the time, excluding any excused absences, while the class is in session; will be unable to receive credit for the class. By reinforcing expectations on high school students to be in the classroom they are not only learning more, but gaining vital life lessons that will ready them for their future careers. This is all happening while reinforcing the accountability of

students once again and making them realize that they must take their educations seriously.

### **Free In-State Tuition (Nyachan Pal)**

In economic times of uncertainty families are reemphasizing the importance of continued education. Many see college as an unrealistic, yet highly desirable goal. For those thousands of Iowa families struggling to make ends meet, let alone attend college, there is an answer. Through the new bill, Hope for the Students the monetary burden of attending college would diminish.

We need to do this because, the average cost to attending a public school increased 47% between 2000 and 2007. Nearly 8% of graduating seniors carry loans of \$40,000 or more in debt. An average debt for a college graduate has soared 50% in the past decade, after inflation. The College Board says tuition and fees rose between \$108 and \$1,398 from 2008-2009. The students who benefit from this would only Iowa residents get the free tuition. If moving from a different state or country you have to be an Iowa resident for 3 years or more. You have to be attending an Iowa public school (high school/university/college) for 3 years or more. You have to be a US citizen/ residency is also required. Requirements will include for high school students, GPA= between a 3.25-4.0 all 4 years, have to be ranked in the top 25% of your class, ACT= 20 or SAT=930. For College students the requirement would be GPA=minimum 3.0 all 4 years, 16 credit hours per semester (full time student), only public Universities, will be given up to 64 credit hours for associates and 128 for a bachelors degree, and assistance given to a maximum of 4 years.

Ineligibility for financial aid will be in effect in the following circumstances: if convicted of a felony involving marijuana, controlled substances or drugs. If you have received a DUI or MIP within the past 2 years. Not maintaining satisfactory academic progress as defined by the college, or other circumstances to be examined by the program board.

### **Reporting of Illegal Activity in Schools (Takashi Yanagi)**

Underage drinking has become rampant in high schools. Whether at homes or parties, students are partaking in the illicit activity, and its prevalence will last if no action is taken place. This is a serious situation because it affects ALL high school students. Not only are troubled students committing these crimes, the innocent ones are hearing about it in the hallways, from school peers, and most importantly, by word of mouth.

Peer pressure is also a reason behind this situation as students want to mimic what their friends or other students are behaving and perform illegal activities. The power to push someone over the edge and drink under the age is relentless and never forgiving.

This has become an enormous problem as more and more students are affected by poor decisions regarding the use of alcohol. Many serious consequences arise from partaking in this illegal activity including suspension, expulsion, destruction of the body, loss of credibility, and ultimately death if events get out of hand.

The problem not only targets underage drinking but also extends to illegal drug activity, especially the use of marijuana. Many students have partaken as the trend to get "high as @#\$%" becomes increasingly popular as the act is promoted even endorsed by famous rap and movie stars. Some students even have the audacity to show up to class wasted or faded out of their minds, obviously diminishing their academic potential.

This issue must be addressed in order to lessen the current use of illegal substances and prevent future activity. The policies put in place currently are not doing an effective enough job to fully combat this problem. It currently exists in every high school whether on a small scale or a massive one involving multiple groups of students.

The solution is to implement a reporting system where students specifically inform their highly trained, high school counselors about past or future illicit activities that they have heard or witnessed (students are more comfortable talking to their designated school counselor on these issues). This will all be anonymous and strict confidentiality will be guaranteed. There will be an incentive program, designed by each school, implemented to reward students if perpetrators are caught. Multiple accounts of a specific incident must be told in order for the accusation to be valid and worth the investigation. Punishment to those who are caught is determined by the police in accordance to Iowa law. This system will greatly reduce the number of illegal activities committed by underage/ high school students. This bill will can help prevent punishable acts in the future due to the potential success of the reporting system and its effectiveness in eradicating the problem.

### **Sleeping Bill (Evert Yang and Arjun Venkatesh)**

An increasing number of high school students are getting less sleep. In a survey, 90% of teens reported getting less than the recommended nine hours of sleep per night, with 10% of those kids reported getting less than 6 hours of sleep. During weeknights an abundance of homework mixed with extra-curricular activities starts a cycle of very little sleep that continues through the weekend as the average teen hangs out with friends and parties until very late hours. Most teens suspect that this cycle of no sleep cannot be good because it makes it hard to stay awake during class. However, this can lead to more serious health problems than just feeling drowsy; thankfully, there are many things one can do to get a better night's sleep. According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, students who get little sleep are three times more likely to show symptoms of depression than students who were well rested. The lack of sleep during a person's adolescence has also been linked to ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder) once he/she becomes older. In 2009, a study with 3,000 Houston children between the ages of 11 and 17 found students getting less than six hours of sleep a night were twice as likely to report poor grades. In another study, the Seattle Children's Research Institute found that teenage boys that got little sleep had more body fat than boys that got more sleep. The solution to this issue is to simply start school 30 minutes later than when they would normal begin. This would mean that for high school and middle school student's class would start 8:30 and 9:30 for elementary school kids. Even though a 30 minute delay seem insignificant, it's been shown that even a small change can result in drastic results. One boarding school in Rhode Island partook in a study conducted by Judith Owens who is the director of the pediatric sleep clinic Hasbro Children's Hospital in Providence, R.I. In this study, the start time of the school for 200 of its non-boarding students was pushed back 30 minutes to 8:30. For the schools boarding students the start time was left at 8 AM. This study is unique because it had the two different start times at the same school during the same period of time. The results of this study were actually quite surprising because even with just a 30-minute change, the positive results were overwhelming. Not only did the average student sleep about 30 minutes later in the morning, many reported going to bed about 15 minutes earlier. Some students even reported that they felt much better when they slept for longer, so they decided to try to go to bed earlier and get more sleep more often. The average amount of sleep a student

got on school nights increased by 45 minutes to nearly eight hours. In addition, the number of students who reported getting at least eight hours of sleep increased from 16.4% to 54.7%. The reported "daytime sleepiness" fell from 49.1% to 20%. The study also proved the aforementioned fact that students with less sleep tend to suffer more from depression and mood swings changes. The percentage of students who rated themselves as depressed or "at least somewhat unhappy" fell to 45% from 66% before the later start time, while the percentage of students who reported feeling annoyed or irritated throughout the day fell from 84% to 63%. Students who got more sleep also tended to eat breakfast more often, which we know is the most important meal of the day.

## **Administration**

### **Sharing Courses (Umar Farooq)**

Under the Iowa Code, schools may participate in whole grade sharing, which allows a significant portion of students to partake in educational activities at a different school. While this is nice, it unfortunately is only allowed for a majority of students, and doesn't meet the educational needs of individual students. These students might have needs or desires that cannot best be accommodated at the school they are going to because of funding, school size, or lack of interest.

We should extend the provisions of the Iowa Code to allow for sharing agreements between schools for numbers less than the majority, and for extracurricular activities, in addition to simple school instruction. This will only be allowed in cases in which the school the student attends does not offer the particular extracurricular activity or educational program.

### **Certification for Interpreters (Megan Moratz)**

Currently Iowa law does not require any education or background for sign language interpreters to apply for and receive a temporary license. Anyone can walk in, pay the \$200 and be a licensed interpreter for the next four years. All interpreters should be required to show proof of graduating from an Interpreter Training Program (ITP) in order to even apply for the temporary license. This ensures that the interpreters know how to sign and will provide quality and effective information for deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

### **Public School Theft (Ryan McElhose)**

Stealing in the public schools is an underrated offense that keeps uncaught students repeating their acts and caught students not realizing the effect with measly consequences. A statewide anti-theft law would be very effective to reduce stealing in Iowa public high schools. Right now if someone steals in high school some perform minimal community service, some have to go through their local teen court, others get ticketed, but sadly some never get caught. At Sioux City East High School, 200 + items have been stolen a year with 10% of the thefts being brought to justice (Office Lewis – East High School). This bill proposal is targeted towards whomever is caught stealing from an Iowa public high school has to serve community service on the basis of the value of the product stolen and their license gets suspended. If the product is worth 1 - 50 dollars, they have to serve 10 hours. If the product is worth 51 – 100 dollars they have to serve 20 hours. If the product is worth 101 – 499 dollars they would have to serve 25 hours. If the product is worth 500 dollars +, then it will be 50 hours of

community service. The community service has to benefit the school district that they attend. If the product is homemade they have to serve 30 hours. If a receipt can't be found the community service hours will be on the basis of the current market value. With the license consequence, if the person doesn't have a license they would have to serve an addition 15 hours. The offender has 4 months to complete the service otherwise they'll have to go under juvenile referral or physical arrest.

## **Transportation/Public Safety**

### **Cyberbullying Amendment to Senate File 61 (Aditi Dinakar)**

For many youth today, bullying is a big issue. Prevalent in Middle School and High school settings, disrespectful and hurtful behavior may target kids in the social hierarchy of teenagers. Not only can bullying be verbal or physical, in today's age, it doesn't even have to happen in person. In the recent years, bullying has taken on a new form – through the World Wide Web. Teens are using social networking tools such as MySpace, Facebook, and Chat Rooms to elicit harmful behaviors towards peers.

At this moment, Iowa has a law against Cyberbullying right now, which is SF 61. This law states that no educator or student shall engage in harassing or bullying behavior. The bill does involve “electronic” means of communication, such as electronic mail, or internet based communications. However, this is limited to bullying on school property. Any form of harassment that takes place on school property is subject to punishment. However, much of bullying that is done online takes place through Facebook. Most students have an account, and through the website, it is very easy to send person hateful comments. Unfortunately, from a school perspective, they can't do much about bullying done through Facebook. The social networking site is blocked on school servers, and in most cases, teachers aren't allowed to access it at school. Because of this, Facebook isn't included in Iowa's law for Cyberbullying, because it doesn't take place on school property.

We need to amend SF 61, to include harassment over Facebook. Not only are kids being bullied by peers, but it is very easy for predators to have access to kids as well. By including a site like Facebook in the Cyberbullying law, schools can have more control over regulating bullying incidents. Though Facebook may not be accessible on school servers, if a bullying incident involving students from the school is reported, the school should be granted temporary access to the site to record the incident, or authorization should be given to obtain those conversations. Also, the Iowa law says that schools must create a program to deal with these situations, but are not forced to follow up on that program. I propose that we strengthen the language to further enforce the actions of the school to prevent bullying.

This amendment to Senate File 61 will not require any money at all. The only thing that the law will change is that schools can better regulate bullying incidents concerning their students, by extending the areas of punishment to bullying over Facebook. It will also mandate school to use their bullying system to punish the bullies and further protect potential victims.

### **Motorcycle Helmet (Nafisa Abdi, Nicole Legrand, and Lena Igram)**

Here in Iowa motorcycle helmets are not mandatory to use, which is why we put together this bill. Helmets decrease the severity of head injuries, the likelihood of death, and the overall cost of medical care. They are designed to cushion and protect riders' heads from the impact of a crash. Just like safety belts in cars, helmets cannot provide total protection against head injury or death, but they do reduce the incidence of both. Helmet use among fatally injured motorcycle riders has remained constant, at just above 50 percent in the last 10 years. Helmet usage made a significant difference in the survivability of motorcycles accidents. The NHTSA report estimated that helmets were 37 percent effective in preventing fatalities, and that helmets save the lives of 1,316 motorcyclists in 2004, but that the lives of 671 motorcyclists who died could have been saved if they had been wearing helmets. In the event of a crash, unhelmeted motorcyclists are three times more likely than helmeted riders to suffer traumatic brain injuries. So who could this hurt? We're only trying to save lives.

### **Speed Display Boards (Burlington High School)**

Burlington High School's idea for this year addresses the issue dealing with transportation. It has come to our attention that some schools in Iowa have posted signs called, driver feedback signs, traffic calming signs and speed display boards. They are usually powered with solar panels or battery. The purpose of these signs is to show drivers down and making them aware of their unsafe speed while traveling or approaching a school zone, which is posted speed limit of 20 M.P.H. by law. We want all schools in Iowa to have these signs placed in their school zones. If not all schools, we would submit to the idea of placing them in elementary school zones.

Based on our preliminary research these signs have been proven to be effective. We feel it is the state's responsibility to ensure to the safety of all pedestrian students to and from home. There is a law that dictates the placement and speed limit of signs in school zones.

The Iowa Department of Transportation Office of Traffic and Safety has published a brochure that states speed limits must be consistently set throughout the state. The same response should be addressed consistently in the placement of signs that monitor speed school zones to curb unsafe (driving) behavior. It appears that one of the ways some local law enforcement agencies address speeders in school zone, "is increasing their presence" and "vigorous school speed zone enforcement" during the beginning of the school year as expressed in the media sources August 2011.

At this point most of our research supports the effectiveness of "feedback signs". Examples: Tests confirm that 80% of speeding drivers will slow down when alerted by a radar sign, overall, evidence suggests that speed displays are a low cost safety improvement that reduces speeds and the proportion of drivers exceeding the speed limit.

We have a copy of 2009 stationary Radar sign program report from the City of Bellevue, WA, Department of Transportation. The report addresses effectiveness, determining community support, and several concerns that might arise.

### **Signs for Recreation (Jeff Critchlow)**

The following bill shall allow for better markings on maps and signs thus providing the locations of trails and other nature areas in surrounding areas. People like to exercise, enjoy nature, and have a good time. However, many people are completely unaware of the parks and trails available to them in their own communities. We, as Iowans, continue to become more and more health conscious, which leads to the need for more ways to get outside and stay active. The issue is not a shortage of trails or

parks. The problem is the lack of knowledge of existing parks and trails. The solution is simple - improve the markings on signs and maps, or create a website, thus increasing the general public's knowledge about the availability of trails and parks. Community members will stay healthier, people will remain happier, and everyone will have a much better shot at living longer.

## Health Committee

### **Smoking Ban** (Aimee Grubb)

For this bill, I would like to make some changes to the previous smoking law. I, as a non smoker, dislike having to walk through a haze of smoke to enter a public place. There are young children and pedestrians, who have breathing medical problems and should not have to deal with that. I think that an outside smoking area should be made an X amount of feet from a public entrance to a public building. That way you would not have to walk through the haze of smoke.

#### Options/Requirements

- Indoor smoking areas with outdoor ventilation- Done in California
- For the restriction to happen the property must be X amount of square feet

### **Push for Tobacco Free Schools Act** (Vamsi Marla)

Part of a country where big tobacco companies are expanding their reaches to youth and young adults, Iowa must help high school students become free from the negative social and health problems of tobacco use in schools. According to an Iowa youth tobacco survey conducted in 2008, youth tobacco rates have dropped from 33% to 20% from the year 2000 (the majority being high school students). The adverse effects of tobacco use are already well known and most high school students do not wish to see their peers using these drugs. In fact, more than 3,800 students are part of the largest tobacco youth prevention program in the state.

Although 70% of schools are already tobacco free, 30% still have no rules prohibiting the use of tobacco on school property. Many school districts argue that they are already preventing the use of tobacco by prohibiting cigarette use in their schools; however, they are ignorant to the fact that there are more than 20 different types of tobacco products besides cigarettes. The simple solution to this problem is that a bill must be created by the Iowa legislature to prohibit the use of any tobacco product by anyone on school property. The idea for this bill was already introduced and approved by the Iowa senate (education committee), and has been pending on the Iowa house for approval since March 14, 2011. However, since this date, no progress has been made on the bill and it has been pushed aside. This bill is both practical financially, costing the state hardly any money at all, and politically, with almost no resistance in the senate, and 14 pro lobbyists and 0 lobbyists against. Enacting this bill would help make Iowa schools safer and a healthier place.

### **School Safety** (Jacob Mayer)

As students go through the school day, all faculty and even students need to be prepared for any emergency. The least they can do is take control of the situation until the correct certified personnel arrives. In our day, health-related emergencies are increasing, and if CPR is needed then the sooner it could be started the more likely someone could be saved from life long injuries or even death. This bill would fix the problem of being unprepared for the most unlikely health emergencies by having people

around the situation be familiar on how to handle things correctly. The procedure of how to fix this problem would start off on certifying all faculty and high school students in CPR. Students will be taking a CPR class during their physical education class, and faculty will be taking a CPR class during an in-service time or during a scheduled time in the summer. This bill would increase the population in the state of being educated on how to handle in emergency situations.

**Bottle Bill** (Elaine Mou)

The bottle deposit law was enacted in 1978 and covers many beverage containers in metal, glass, and plastic. It has had an 86% recycling rate and recycles 82,000 tons of material each year, much of which would normally pollute rivers and public property, as well as endanger wildlife. The recycling process not only prevents pollution, but also provides jobs for lowans through beneficial work.

Currently, lawmakers have attempted to simultaneously cut down on landfills through stricter controls and remove the bottle bill, goals which contradict each other. Meanwhile, the bottle bill is actually in need of improvement to keep up with changes since its creation 33 years ago, not scrapping. While bottled water and sports drink consumption has risen enormously in the past, these bottles can not be deposited, and there is little incentive to avoid littering them or sending them to landfills.

The Bottle Bill should be maintained, and ideally amended to include water and sports drink bottles in deposit rules. This will provide incentive to improve recycling rates and keep Iowa clean, while keeping up and possibly improving job opportunities involved in the process.